

.....Preservation is progress
May we be worthy stewards.....

Chautauqua Historical Society

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June 2004

- The Newsletter is published three times a year: February, June, and September.
- The Newsletter is a membership benefit at the Regular, Patron, and Piasa Bluffs Assembly levels.
- **Patron and PBA** support includes a membership in the Chautauqua Network.
- CHS members are encouraged to submit articles to the editor for inclusion in the Newsletter.

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We have 65 regular, patron and PBA members and send the Newsletter to 100 households.



SOME OF THE MOST AMERICAN THINGS IN ILLINOIS

Historic Sites in Jersey County

.....story begins on page three

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President's Message



Imagine the year 1904. Down the Mississippi River from Chautauqua, St. Louis was celebrating the World's Fair. That summer many visitors would also arrive at Chautauqua-- by

steamboat, train, or by way of the back road in carriages. They came to escape the heat of the city and also the fair crowds there.

There were heavy storms before the 1904 season began. The superintendent of the grounds, W. O. Paisley, and his crew worked very hard to open the season on time. A local generator was installed and electric lights were placed around the grounds. The auditorium was wired for better lighting. They also managed to build new rustic bridges over the creeks.

If you came on the grounds from the railroad station, there were two rustic bridges. The left one went to The Hotel, and the other went to the Assembly grounds. 1904 was the first year of operation for the Hotel Chautauqua, which was soon called "The Inn." It was not on the main Chautauqua grounds. Rooms rented for \$2.00-\$2.50 a day. On May 12 that year, Pi-sa Hotel became the official name of the hotel within Chautauqua's grounds. It later was called the Piasa Springs Hotel. It was located in the area of today's playground.

On the riverfront there was a new boat wharf and a new fleet of launches and row boats to rent. Mr. Sauvage of Alton provided the "moving pictures" at the Auditorium, and also managed the concessions at the new swimming pool. The program that year began on July 14 and lasted through August 10. There was one political debate, and several lectures. There were many special classes, including music, art, nature study, nursing and WCTU methods.

Our quiet, private Chautauqua was once a busy commercial resort. Imagine a day in 1904. Steamboats and trains were arriving. Everyone entering the grounds bought an admission ticket. There were lots of choices of things to do. The Auditorium had church services and

lectures. There were burros to ride and boats to rent. Visitors could enjoy a cup of water at the spring or stand on the board walk to watch people enjoy the big pool full of river water.

One hundred years later, we will celebrate the anniversary of the St. Louis World's Fair. Thanks to Katie Schaeffer and the Program Committee, there will be many events that will recall those earlier times.

Rose Tomlinson

Piasa Bluffs Assembly Events

For the first twenty years of our community's history, the "season" meant an "assembly" period where a variety of programs were offered to annual, monthly, and weekly residents, and daily guests. The programs were designed to reflect the mission and objectives of the Piasa Bluffs Assembly/Piasa Chautauqua movement: religion, education, and recreation.

Katie Schaeffer, Program Chair for the NPC Board, heads a splendid effort to provide a main theme for the 119th season, **connections to the 1904 World's Fair in St. Louis**. CHS is working closely with her to complement that theme by sponsoring "assembly"-type events.

- May 31 Flying of the Colors Ceremony, Chautauqua Veterans Flag Detail, 10AM
- June 17 Landmark Preservation Council of Illinois, Conference Tour, 2:30PM
- June 18 Season's Opening of the Jersey Door, 7:30PM
- July 3 Re-dedication of the Wm. H. Clarkson Memorial Sundial, 10AM, Auditorium grove
- July 7 Chautauqua Armed Forces Memorial Day, Veteran's Flag Detail, 9AM. **All community flags will fly at half-staff.**
- July 21 Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle Roundtable, book presentation, Brian Hall on "Lewis and Clark." 10:30 AM, Town Hall

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Historic Sites in Jersey County

The Mississippi River, which generally flows broadly and benignly along the western edge of Jersey County, has long attracted people to its shores. Those who live along the banks have a great respect for the country's largest river, especially when it overflows its bed. But the river's strength is matched by the hardy inhabitants who weather the river's occasional rages to hang onto some of the most beautiful landscape in the Prairie State. They understand the payoff. The river, after all, created the beauty when it long ago cut through the limestone, leaving behind a magnificent palisade into which are tucked a few of the state's best-preserved historic districts and sites. A drive through Pere Marquette State Park to Grafton, Elsah, and Chautauqua provides a glimpse of a past that is fiercely protected by its forward-looking inhabitants. It is American history in microcosm.

The Mississippi River shaped the histories of its communities, yet each place tells a different story. At Pere Marquette State Park, for example, Jesuit missionary priest Father Jacques Marquette and explorer Louis Joliet stepped ashore in 1673 to greet Hopewell and Illini Indians. The first Europeans to enter the area at the confluence of the Illinois and Mississippi rivers, the two men served as harbingers of what was to come. Marquette described in his journal the depiction of the Piasa Birds, legendary monstrous winged creatures that devoured men. The Illini Indians high on a bluff near present-day Alton had painted the giant pictograph. Although the story of the Piasa and a modern rendering of its image survive, the local Native American population did not. What is now better remembered is the European connection, perhaps because a monument erected to Marquette marks his "discovery," and the state park established long after his arrival is named in his honor.

The lodge and cabins at Pere Marquette State Park are illustrations in a more recent story, but one that is etched deeply into the American psyche. Pere Marquette was one of six state park lodges built as make-work projects during the Depression. Like other Depression-era programs, the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) employed young, able-bodied men to complete construction projects. At a time when soup kitchens could not keep pace with the hungry, the CCC offered significant relief in the way of food and lodging as payment for their labor. The treasures the program left behind--mostly well-constructed public buildings--are invaluable. At Pere Marquette, workers used limestone from the nearby Grafton quarry to lay stone floors, build cottages, and construct the



700-ton fireplace that dominates the cavernous lobby of the lodge. For the massive support beams, sometimes up to three feet in diameter, the men used Douglas fir, western cedar (shipped from Oregon), and peckey cypress. The crew also fashioned rustic metal work for chandeliers, door handles, and window locks. The craftsmanship exhibited in the CCC work at Pere Marquette is remarkable, perhaps an indication that these men were unwilling to compromise their pride. Maybe they understood that they received more than food and a bed--they learned skills that they could market later in a recovered economy. Whatever their thinking, they left a durable

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monument to American know-how. Today, the lodge and cabins accommodate guests who attend conferences, who want to hike the miles of trails, or who simply go there for its retreat-like setting and to enjoy the slow pace found in the nearby villages.

Just a few miles down the road from Pere Marquette State Park is Grafton. Settled in the mid-1830s, Grafton's development parallels the ebb and flow of the economy, as well as the river. James Mason, the town founder, chose the spot to attempt to wrest control of the river trade from nearby Alton.



He worked with his business connections across the river to try to swing trade to St. Louis. One of the first structures built was a wharf, an integral component of a successful river trade.

The town grew rapidly in its first few years, but the financial panic of 1837, which crippled much of the nation, also struck in tiny Grafton. Stores closed, and for about three years the town nearly sank. By 1840 the economy recovered, and Grafton began to grow again. Tragedy struck again in 1844 when the river flooded, destroying the wharf and forcing citizens to flee from riverside homes and to abandon low-lying businesses. Still, hardy villagers hung on and continued to develop the community. Many of the structures are solidly constructed of brick or local limestone, both more durable survivors of floods.

Enterprising townspeople adapted well to changes: The rock originally quarried for local use found a greater marketplace and was shipped out for construction purposes elsewhere. The railroad arrived, bringing further opportunities, and the river continued to offer trades in fishing and mussel harvesting (a local button factory benefited from the latter). Despite consistent efforts to capitalize on local resources, the village could not deny its vulnerability to the unpredictable Mississippi. Floods of varying degrees of severity continued to plague Grafton and hindered it from substantial growth. A flood in 1973 rivaled the devastating effects of the 1844 flood, but the great flood of 1993 outdid both of those. While many solidly built historic structures survived, most needed extensive renovation and repair. Still, residents have chosen to remain locked in an endless arm-wrestling competition with the river. Today it is the tourist trade that gives the community a toehold in its precarious riverside location. Casino boats, bicycle and boat rentals, restaurants, gift emporiums, and antique shops vie for visitors' pocketbooks. For now the river is calm, but it does not show any signs of completely receding. The villagers of Grafton do not look like they are going to give an inch, either.

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A Roundtable Book Selection

The 100th anniversary of the St. Louis World's Fair has generated a lot of interest in our area, and in Chautauqua. Now we have an excellent book with lots of photos written by one of our own. Robert Jackson, son of Bob and nephew of Bill and Bruce, has written a fun book, *Meet Me in St. Louis, A Trip to the 1904 World's*



Fair, published by HarperCollins Children's Books, 2004. Jackson's book is suitable for children in the middle grades and their parents and grandparents. The Fair comes alive through a series of stories, like the one about Mark Twain telling tales of his days as a river pilot, to amuse visiting dignitaries. Or the descriptions of the States' exhibitions: **California** had an elephant constructed of almonds; **Minnesota's** butter-molded sculptures included a woman milking a cow and a bust of President Teddy Roosevelt. **Virginia** provided a smaller version of Monticello, **Tennessee** brought a replica of the Hermitage, and **Kentucky** reassembled a log cabin in which Abraham Lincoln had lived. **Connecticut** sent a chair used by George Washington at the Continental Congress, as well as a chair from the Mayflower.

The rides---the giant Ferris Wheel, a railway that went all over the grounds, a water chute, and boats---provided entertainment for the daily crowds. There were magic/illusion shows, animal acts, and strange sights from all over the world. The atmosphere, as described in Jackson's book, was electric. For seven months in 1904, the Fair defined St. Louis. *Meet Me in St. Louis* is an excellent way to visit the World's Fair and learn why it was such an important event for this region. The stories are many and informative; the photographs alone are worth owning this book. Congratulations, Robert Jackson! The book will be on sale at the Jersey Door. The Chautauqua Historical Society has scheduled a book-signing for August 6 at the Kentucky Home.

The King's Daughters' Summer Home

There were several "group" homes in our early Chautauqua. Included were the Women's Christian Temperance Union home, destroyed by fire in 1957, the Women's Christian Union home, now Sam Schmidt's place, the Women's Relief Corps (the Women's Auxiliary of the Grand Army of the Republic, Civil War veterans), torn down and rebuilt, now Robert and Barbara Osborn's cottage, and the King's Daughters' Summer Home, owned today by Judy and Bob O'Hearne..

The Piasa Chautauqua Circle of King's Daughters built the cottage in 1898, and it remained a group home until 1941 when it was given over to New Piasa Chautauqua. Melborne and Mae Scherman, Judy's parents, purchased the lease from NPC in 1942, and named the cottage **Schermansion**.

Who are the King's Daughters and Sons? Founded in 1886 in Chautauqua, New York as an international and interdenominational organization of Christian women and men, the King's Daughters and Sons is dedicated to service in Christ's name.

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The same is true down the Great River Road at Elsie. Although it sits back farther from the river in a gently sloping hollow, Elsie residents know plenty about the river's ways. Another river town, Elsie



originally earned recognition as a free landing site. That is long gone, and only one structure from the original waterfront site survives. The bulk of the village sits back far enough to have been spared some of the river's wrath. Elsie never had the varied business climate that Grafton enjoyed, but it is one of the most intact late nineteenth-century towns along the Mississippi. The inability to make modern improvements in the tiny hamlet is now its strongest asset. Tourists have long flocked to Elsie to get a glimpse of the past, and it is a real village--not a re-creation designed to attract tourists. Villagers work hard to retain the character of their town, and not just because it is "old," but because it is simply a beautiful village set in a landscape that is arguably unmatched anywhere.

Except down the road, maybe, at Chautauqua. If ever there was a piece of Americana, this is it. The original Chautauqua, at Fair Point on Lake



Chautauqua in New York, began as the National Sunday School Assembly in 1874. It quickly grew into a significant social institution, one that Theodore Roosevelt later described as, "the most American thing in America." Chautauquas, summer camps



that were part lyceum, part camp meeting, caught on across the country. In Illinois there were over fifty chautauqua assemblies. Some communities continue to use the still-standing auditoriums built for that purpose, but the entire New Piasa Chautauqua Historic District still exists as a Chautauqua community with its summer-long education, religious, and entertainment programs.

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For more than a hundred years, Chautauqua residents have gathered for evening concerts, plays, or lectures. Established in 1885, construction of the community buildings and summer cottages began almost at once. Most of the 127 cottages were built before World War II, and the few erected after that blend nicely to complement the earlier homes. At the front entrance is a "station stand," a reminder that



Chautauqua was once a stop on the Chicago, Peoria, and St. Louis Railway. Adjacent to the stand are the recreational facilities, which include an outdoor swimming pool built in 1904, a park, soccer fields, and tennis courts.

Other public buildings include the chapel, built in 1925, the roofed open-air auditorium, completed in 1904, and a "Town Hall" building and administration building, both completed about 1934. Fifty years ago, the community's confectionery and general store assured that summer residents did not have to leave the premises to restock essentials.

The heavily wooded grounds lend an air of peace and tranquility to the community, an atmosphere that residents clearly want to retain. New Piasa Chautauqua publications have stressed the importance that future construction or growth be consistent with the vernacular cottage-style residences. Chautauqua, like its neighbor Elsah, lies in a hollow largely protected by towering bluffs on either side, further



Kupferle Chapel,
1925

assuring that very little can get in, except the sometimes rising waters of the Mississippi.

All these distinctly different places sit within fifteen miles of each other. Each represents a discrete era of the state's history, and each captures perfectly the essence of those periods. For those who want a quick look at the Midwest's history, they might start by looking at these "most American things" in Jersey County.

Cynthia Fuener
Editor, *Historic Illinois*

Cynthia Fuener, author of the lead article for this issue, is a friend of CHS members Jim and Susan Seiber. Her office is in Springfield, Illinois.

Her article appeared originally in the December 2002 issue of *Historic Illinois*. Cynthia is the editor of the magazine, which is published six times a year. We have permission to reprint the article in this form. A few minor changes were made in the article, and Mrs. Fuener was advised of the changes. The original article contained nineteen photos. In this version, we reprinted the River Road scene and four photos of New Piasa Chautauqua. We are grateful also to Tracey Sculle, National Register Coordinator for IHPS, for permission to reprint these Chautauqua images. The photos of Pere Marquette State Park, Grafton, Elsay, and the Kupferle Chapel at Chautauqua are reprinted courtesy of greatriverroad.com.

Subscription rates for *Historic Illinois* are \$10 for one year. Price includes six issues of *Historic Illinois* and the full-color *Historic Illinois* calendar. A two-year subscription costs \$17; price includes twelve issues of *Historic Illinois* and calendars for two years. For subscription information, write *Historic Illinois*, Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, 1 Old State Capitol Plaza, Springfield, IL 62701-1507, or phone 217-524-6045.



Platform Lecture

The Second Annual Chautauqua Platform Lecture will be delivered on July 25 by Robert Moore, National Park Service historian, in Chautauqua's historic auditorium. His topic will be "*Empirical Man Meets the Frontier: The Science of the Lewis and Clark Expedition.*" Be certain to reserve this date.



Kentucky Home Update

Kudos for this project need to be spread far and wide. So, thanks to the following:

- The **Chautauqua community** for providing renovation funds in the 2004 budget;
- The **Chautauqua Historical Society** for co-sponsoring the project, and providing more than \$9,000 from Jersey Door activities;
- **Ruth Nickols** and the Station Stand volunteers for adding over \$7,000 to the contributed fund total;
- **Joe Laffler** and **Tim Tomlinson**, who have supervised the project for the NPC Board and the Historical Society, respectively;
- **Chris Hagin** for monitoring and managing the finances and keeping the project on budget; and
- **Dave Hagin** for countless hours of volunteer work on the project in managing, supervising, and hands-on labor.



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- July 25 Second Chautauqua Platform Lecture, Robert Moore, "Science and Lewis and Clark," 7PM. Auditorium
- July 26 CLSC Roundtable presentation, "Ladies, Learners, and Leaders: The Women of Chautauqua." Video and discussion. 7PM. Town Hall
- Aug. 6 CLSC Book-signing, Author Robert Jackson discusses *Meet Me in St. Louis*, Kentucky Home. 7PM

The events listed for July 3 (Re-dedication) and July 25 (Platform Lecture) are described in more detail elsewhere in the Newsletter. More information about the other events will be available in the *Chautauqua Channels*.

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The aim of the Order is taken from Mark 10:45, "Not to be ministered unto, but to minister." The badge of the Order is a silver Maltese Cross inscribed with the letters IHN representing the watchword of the Order, In His Name.

The present headquarters of the King's Daughters and Sons are at Chautauqua, New York, on the grounds of the Chautauqua Institution. They sponsor a five-week internship for young people "to grow spiritually and intellectually, develop Christian leadership skills, and share friendship with young and old alike." The internship program began in 1920. The group also has three scholarship houses on the Chautauqua grounds to house the annual interns, a Fellowship Hall for use by students for classes and meals, and a Chapel.

The King's Daughters and Sons support missionary programs all over the world. Since 1934 they have had a ministry for North American Indian missions and schools. They support literacy programs, work with the aged,

handicapped and underprivileged, and sponsor hospitals, youth camps, and day care centers.

Interested: contact the International Order of The King's Daughters and Sons, P. O. Box 1017, Chautauqua, NY 14722-1017

News from Chautauqua, Illinois 1904

For the first 20-25 years of our community's history, a short narrative about each season's events was sent on to Chautauqua, New York to become part of a fall edition of the Chautauqua magazine. Other Chautauquas across the country provided similar information. What follows is the entry for our Chautauqua, 1904.

"The twenty-first session* of the Piasa Chautauqua Assembly was held from July 14 to August 10, and, while the grounds are but thirty-seven miles from the St. Louis Exposition, the gate receipts were almost the same as those for 1903.

Recognition Day was held on August 4, with Rev. J. H. Hatten as the speaker, his subject being "The Higher Expansion." A diploma was awarded to Miss Laura Walters of St. Louis. About twenty-five C.L.S.C. alumni and members were present. The C.L.S.C. work was directed by Mrs. Carrie L. Grout, and Round Table talks were given by her.

Many improvements were made this summer, including a fine hotel, bathing pool, new entrance, new fleet of launches and boats, sixteen rustic bridges, new floors in the auditorium and Hall of Philosophy, enlarged pumping plant, electric light plant, and eighteen cottages. Many other cottages will be put up before the next assembly....."

** Some early descriptions of our Chautauqua date the founding back to 1883, not 1885.*



**The Benjamin St. James Fry Chapter
of the
Chautauqua Literary and Scientific Circle
2004 Season**

This season's Roundtable events include a discussion of Brian Hall's novel of the Lewis and Clark journey, *I Should be Extremely Happy in Your Company*, a fictional parallel to Stephen Ambrose's *Undaunted Courage* (July 21); the annual Chautauqua Platform Lecture, this year by Robert Moore, National Park historian (July 25), and a video presentation about famous women involved with the New York Chautauqua (July 26). The Fry Chapter also will sponsor a book-signing by Robert Jackson (August 6) at the Kentucky Home.

There are ten Historical Society members enrolled in the Fry Chapter. They also are part of the national CLSC book program. All members of the Society are eligible to join the Fry Chapter, and it's simple. Tell us you want to be enrolled. If you decide you want also to be a national member, it will cost you \$10 annually. For information, ask for the CLSC file at the community library. If you have access to the internet, go to <http://www.ciweb.org/clsc.html>. There is plenty of information at that site, including an opportunity to download the complete reading list, dating back to 1878.

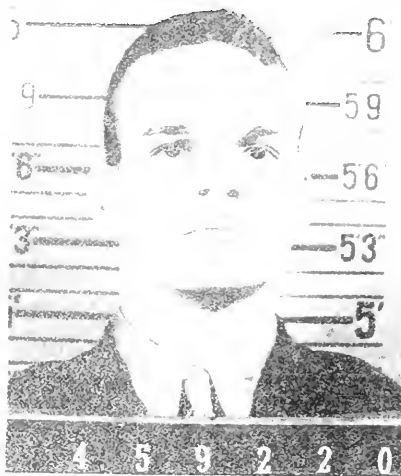
Reading List for 2004

- *Act of Creation: The Founding of the United Nations: A Story of Superpowers, Secret Agents, Wartime Allies and Enemies and Their Quest for a Peaceful World*
Stephen C. Schlesinger
- *My Own Medicine*
Dr. Geoffrey Kurland
- *The Smartest Guys in the Room: The Amazing Rise & Scandalous Fall of Enron*
Bethany McLean
- *America's Women: Four Hundred Years of Dolls, Drudges, Helpmates, and Heroines*
Gail Collins

- *Better Together: Restoring the American Community*
Robert D. Putnam
- *You Are Not a Stranger Here*
Adam Haslett
- *Heaven's My Destination*
Tappan Wilder
- *The Spiral Staircase: My Climb out of Darkness*
Karen Armstrong
- *Empires of Light: Edison, Tesla, Westinghouse, and the Race to Electrify the World*
Jill Jonnes

Short descriptions of the selections can be found in the CLSC folder in the library.

***Chautauqua Historical Society
William Hazelett Clarkson
Memorial Sundial
Restoration Project***

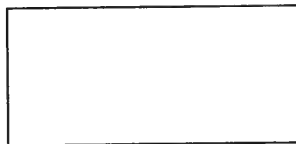
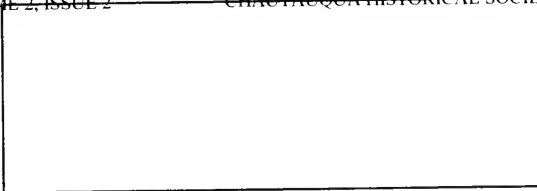


On July 4, 1954, in a solemn and moving evening ceremony, Chautauqua honored the memory of Billy Clarkson and all Chautauquans who served the nation. He was killed in action, July 7, 1944. A memorial sundial, given by his mother, was dedicated to his memory, as was a new flagpole to fly his military funeral flag. The last fifty years have been harsh to the sundial and flagpole in front of the Auditorium. The NPC Board of Directors has approved a project of the Chautauqua Historical Society to restore and renovate the area. This renews our commitment to honor those who served the country, and who are responsible in large part for the freedom we enjoy and often take for granted.

1. The sundial will be restored to as close to its original condition as possible, by stripping paint, building up chipped areas with epoxy, and polishing both the brass sundial and the brass rings on the pedestal.
2. The flagpole will be cleaned and repainted with a green/black all weather paint. New hardware will be installed.
3. A stone will be purchased for placement at the base of the flagpole. It will be suitably inscribed, e.g., *In honor of the men and women of the Chautauqua community who have served our country in peace and war, 1846 to the present.....*
(Col. A. F. Rodgers, an important figure in the early days of the community, actually served in the Mexican War of 1846.)
4. A smaller stone will be used to display the Allen/Spencer memorial plaque.
5. The four stone benches in the area will be bleached and power-washed.
6. Armed forces flags will be purchased for each branch of the military.
7. New mulch will be added in the area; the sundial garden will be improved.
8. A military funeral flag exhibit will be developed.

Cost estimates for the project components total approximately \$3400.





.....PRESEVATION IS PROGRESS
May we be worthy stewards.....

Address inquires and other communications to

Tim Tomlinson
Editor, CHS Newsletter
Post Office Box 87
Elsah, Illinois 62028
Phone: 618-374-1518; Fax: 618-374-1518
Email: Trt1933@aol.com
Copy editors/proofing: Kathy Brammeier, Susan Seiber

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Chesterfield, MO 63017

The mission and purpose of the *Chautauqua Historical Society* is the preservation and enhancement of the historic traditions and culture of New Piasa Chautauqua, Chautauqua, Illinois, the encouragement of historical research on the Chautauqua community and nearby historic districts, the publication of historical brochures, pamphlets, and other written material on New Piasa Chautauqua, remaining permanent assemblies and chautauquas in other parts of the United States, and the national Chautauqua movement, and the establishment of an educational program to inform the Chautauqua community and the general public of the historical and educational value of New Piasa Chautauqua

The Society is an Illinois Not For Profit Corporation

